

## Message Text

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FOR COMMERCE

E.O 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, FR

SUBJECT: MAJOR EXPORT PROJECTS PROGRAM - MODERNIZATION OF THE  
CANAL DU MIDI

1. CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN LOCALLY TO THE PROSPECTS OF MODERNIZING THE HISTORIC CANAL DU MIDI IN AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A COMMERCIALLY VIABLE INLAND WATERWAY FOR CARGO SHIPMENTS BETWEEN FRANCE S ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN COASTS. IF SUCH A PROJECT IS APPROVED BY BOTH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMIC REGIONS DIRECTLY AFFECTED, THIS MAY PROVIDE A MAJOR PROJECT OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S. FIRMS, AND TECHNOLOGY. IT IS FOR THIS PURPOSE THAT THIS PRELIMINARY REPORT IS SUBMITTED.

2. AT THE REQUEST OF THE MINISTRY OF EQUIPMENT, THE SOCIETE D ETUDES TECHNIQUES ET ECONOMIQUES HAS COMPLETED A STUDY ON THE POTENTIAL TRAFFIC PATTERNS OF THE CANAL DU MIDI AND THE NECESSARY BERTHING ARRANGEMENTS TO INCREASE THE ACTIVITY OF THIS INLAND WATERWAY. THE CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY IS THAT THIS MODERNIZATION PROJECT WOULD COST APPROXIMATELY 222 MILLION  
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FRANCS (47,234,55 DOLLARS): 60% WOULD BE FINANCED BY THE GOF

AND THE BALANCE BY THE THREE ECONOMIC REGIONS CONCERNED:  
AQUITAINE, MIDI-PYRENEES AND LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON. IF THE CANAL  
IS MODERNIZED TO ALLOW PASSAGE OF HEAVIER BARGES WITH A CAPACITY  
OF 250 TONS BETWEEN TOULOUSE AND SETE THE ANNUAL FREIGHT  
CAPACITY OF THE WHOLE CANAL (I.E. BORDEAUX-SETE) CAN INCREASE  
FROM THE PRESENT 600,000 TONS PER ANNUM TO 2,000,000 TONS BY  
1985.

3. SEVERAL FIRMS ARE CONSIDERING THE CHEAPER TRANSPORTATION  
COSTS OF SUCH AN IMPROVED INLAND WATERWAY: FOR EXAMPLE, THE  
ENRICHED URANIUM PLANT WHICH IS BEING BUILT AT TRICASTIN (DROME)  
WOULD CONSIDER USING THE CANAL FOR IMPORTING MATERIALS FROM  
SPAIN THROUGH BORDEAUX TO TRICASTIN, AN AGRICULTURAL FOOD  
PROCESSING PLANT PLANNED FOR CONSTRUCTION AT THE PORT OF LE  
VERDON NEAR BORDEAUX COULD SHIP ITS PRODUCTS (MOSTLY CEREALS)  
THROUGH THE CANAL TO THE AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES, ESPECIALLY  
THOSE IN THE CASTELNAUDARY AREA, THE DASSAULT AVIATION FIRM  
IS STUDYING THE POSSIBILITY OF USING CANAL BARGES TO TRANSPORT  
AIRCRAFT PARTS BETWEEN TOULOUSE AND FOS, A HYDROCARBON  
DISTRIBUTOR IN THE NARBONNE REGION IS CONSIDERING BARGE TRANSPORT  
FOR CARGOS FROM FRONTIGNAN, ETC...

4. CONSIDERABLE FINANCIAL PROBLEMS REMAIN. PROMOTORS OF THE  
CANAL PROJECT SEEK TO HAVE IT INSCRIBED IN THE GOF,S VII  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN. ALSO, THE POSSIBLE COLLABORATION  
AND SHARING OF COSTS BY THE THREE ECONOMIC REGIONS THROUGH  
WHICH THE CANAL PASSES IS YET TO BE DETERMINED.

5. MORE DETAILED INFORMATION WILL FOLLOW WHEN AVAILABLE.

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